Sung one of its most distinctive characteristics and in which rests one of its chief claims to remembrance.

The other outstanding phase of this activity was a fresh interpretation of Confucianism which for more than six centuries constituted the orthodox philosophy of the scholar class and which during most of that time had the support of the state through the established system of education and examinations.

The examinations, it may be noted in passing, were further developed. Whereas even under the T'ang it had been possible to gain admission to the lower ranks of the bureaucracy without meeting the state literary tests, the Sung made the procedure more strict, increased the number of successful candidates, and rendered very difficult entrance to the civil service by any other route.

The Neo-Confucianism developed under the Sung claimed, like the reforms of Wang An-shih, to be based upon the Classics of the Confucian school but displayed some features which probably would not have been recognized by the authors of these documents. It was really a synthesis of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, in which Confucianism predominated. Buddhism as a separate cult was declining: there was not nearly such intellectual activity within its monasteries as in the T'ang and the centuries immediately before the T'ang. It was still sufficiently strong, however, to make itself felt in the reviving Confucianism. To put it in another way, Sung Neo-Confucianism was Confucianism thought through afresh under the influence of Buddhism and Taoism. It was an attempt to put into orderly form what the educated believed about the universe—to integrate into a consistent whole the philosophies of the age. As, not far from the

same time, the schoolmen of Europe were building a cosmogony and a cosmology which claimed to be Christian but which were shaped by the Aristotelean tradition, and as out of them came the work of St. Thomas Aquinas which gave to the theology of the Roman Catholic Church what proved to be its official expression, so under the Sung Chinese thinkers, stimulated by Buddhist and Taoist thought, remolded Confucianism into the form which was long to remain standard, and the recognized master was to be Chu Hsi.

The stream of thought that culminated in Chu Hsi had its